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ABSTRACT

Although individual State Advisory Councils for Vocational Education (SACVE) will differ in their opinions as to specific changes needed in the Vocational Education Act, they share a core of basic concepts about the needs of vocational education as they relate to reauthorization. Because the SACVE believe that the basis of federal involvement in vocational education and training should be developing human resources as a capital asset to the nation, they believe that the focus of vocational education reauthorization legislation should be on the provision of education and training for the development of a skilled work force. It is critical that a single educational agency be designated as the administrative authority for vocational education, because only through a single agency can articulation and coordination be achieved. Similarly, federal administrative control and federal financial support of vocational education must be maintained in order to maintain the states' capacity to address changing economic and employment needs and to ensure that state vocational education systems can be responsive to national priorities and emergencies. Other important areas that must be addressed during the reauthorization of the Vocational Education Act are the need to restore citizen involvement in vocational education and the need to ensure the continuation of vocational student organizations. (MN)

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

OF

STATE ADVISORY COUNCILS ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION REAUTHORIZATION

A TIME FOR REDIRECTION

A POSITION OF THE
STATE ADVISORY COUNCILS
ON and FOR
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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December 5, 1981

SACVE'S

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION REAUTHORIZATION
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A POSITION OF THE
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I. Introduction

The need to redirect Federal support for vocational education in the 1980's has been voiced by involved individuals across America. Redirecting vocational education will require the best and most intense efforts of the educational community and the full involvement of representatives of business, industry, labor, agriculture, and the general public.

Congress, in 1968, created the National (NACVE) and State Advisory Councils for Vocational Education (SACVE) as autonomous bodies representing all parties who have an interest in employment related education and training. Charged to advise, evaluate and report, Councils have an implied responsibility to communicate to Congress both effective and ineffective parts of current Federal law for vocational education. Although SACVEs will differ in their opinions as to specific changes needed in the Vocational Education Act, they share a core of basic concepts about the needs of vocational education as they relate to reauthorization. These concepts are presented in this position paper.

The Federal Government has never accepted the concept that it has a place in general education funding. The U.S. Constitution is silent on the topic of education, and enactments on education at the Federal level have been in response to national emergencies. In 1917 the Smith-Huges Act was passed as an emergency action to cope with the inordinate demands of World War I. This first Congressional support for education was intended to foster a strong defense, a competent work force and a healthy economy.

Over the years, several major changes were made in Federal policy to address social and economic conditions confronting the nation. The 1963 Act was aimed at bridging the gap between education and the world of work for an increasing number of educated idle youth of America who faced severe unemployment as well as bolstering a badly sagging economy. The vocational education amendments of 1968 addressed both economic and social needs, including serving special populations by providing support services and financial aid to insure their success in vocational education programs. In 1976, Congress passed the most recent vocational legislation. In retrospect, it can be recognized that this legislation took the social issues initiated in the enactment of 1968 and made them the primary focus, leaving the human resources development and concerns of economics as secondary concerns.

The 1960's and 70's have brought growing frustration over ever increasing unemployment, unrest in the cities, swelling welfare roles, increased crime, soaring inflation, and dependency on big government. The issues of reindustrialization, economic revitalization and the reestablishment of America

in the world markets, constitute a crisis. Vocational education and training can and must be a full partner in addressing these issues. A big hurdle for the citizenry is to recognize the economic value of vocational education and training as an integral part of the solution to America's problems. Myths such as "vocational education is for someone else's child" and "vocational education leads to dead-end jobs" must be exposed as fallacies before this hurdle can be surmounted. Another hurdle to revitalization is to acknowledge that our nonrenewable natural resources are dwindling and that our greatest resource and capital asset is the human potential of our populace.

The task of vocational education assisting in the revitalization of America is complicated by a variety of factors including: (1) urbanization of the population, along with employment laws impacting youth and other factors that have deprived many youth of work experience; (2) polarization and isolation of rural communities from economic and human resource development, which forces migration to urban areas; (3) a multitude of factors that have brought many students to vocational and training programs without basic education skills needed to succeed in these programs; (4) broadening programs to serve special needs groups, which requires many special and supplementary services; (5) ever increasing levels of technology in the work place that requires more sophisticated skills in many areas of work; and (6) ever dwindling financial resources to support vocational education and training. Unless Federal legislation allows vocational education to address these factors, its success level will be diminished.

The nation is experiencing a greater paradox today that at any time in our recent history. There are many unfilled jobs requiring specific skills, while high levels of unemployment exist in many areas of the nation, particularly among youth ages 16-24 and minorities. Current national priorities call for the reindustrialization of America and strengthening our national defense posture through better trained and equipped personnel. These priorities call for a dramatically increased employment and training capacity in the states at a time when the national funding level is being reduced. Such reductions, coupled with inflation and the inability of state and local entities to take up the slack, will result in less training, not more.

Solutions to this paradox are not easy. Some propose that employers train workers. Many employers already do a great deal of training. However, when we consider that 80% of the new jobs are with employers who have less than 20 employees, it becomes obvious that such an arrangement is not a solution to providing the training needed in this nation during the 1980's and beyond.

In view of the foregoing discussion, the purpose of secondary, postsecondary and adult vocational programs has not changed, it continues to be the preparation of people for work. It is true that the needs of individuals and the employer change, and different strategies must be employed; but the basic purpose remains unchanged from 1917 to the present.

If vocational education is to effectively serve in the resolution of national crises and address continuing and emerging national priorities, vocational reauthorization must be once again based upon the development of the national human resource as a capital asset to America. The long-term financing of vocational education must be recognized as an investment for the full use of human resources and the maintenance of a healthy national economy. It is time now to fashion vocational education legislation which is forward looking and is an integral part of our nation's overall economic thrust.

II. Planning for Federal Legislation

The revitalization of our nation's economy and the continuous priority to provide a stable and competent work force should be the primary focus of vocational education reauthorization. Quality vocational education has demonstrated its ability to prepare people for work and is a direct cost benefit to continued economic growth. Vocational education is an investment in the future of America. Vocational education's role in economic revitalization must be state-coordinated and based upon local level human capital and economic development needs.

The State Advisory Councils recommend that -

> The basis of Federal involvement in vocational education and training should be developing human resources as a capital asset to the nation and addressing national priorities. As the legislation is written, the legislative process must guarantee input by all populations concerned with vocational education. Furthermore, access to vocational education by all populations must also be guaranteed.
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> The focus of legislation should be to provide education and training for the development of a skilled work force. If the skilled work force is achieved through vocational education, the probability of the accomplishment of the goals of other social programs will be enhanced and the solution of existing social problems will logically follow.

III. Federal Role in Vocational Education

The Federal role in vocational education and training is two-fold: first, Federal support is needed to maintain the states' capacity to address changing economic and employment needs through quality vocational education programs and services. Second, Federal support should provide leadership and coordination to the state and local education systems so those systems can be responsive to national priorities and emergencies.

The State Advisory Councils recommend that -

> The Federal role in vocational education and training should be one of providing resources to the states towards resolution of national priorities through a coordinated state vocational education system.

IV. Governance of Vocational Education and Training

In our country, these are issues of a priority and crisis nature essential to the revitalization of the national economy. These are the responsibility of the Federal government. Vocational education and training can help address these priorities and emergencies for the good of all. Since vocational education and training occurs at varying educational levels and among various agencies, it is critical that a single education agency be designated as the administrative authority. Only through a single agency can articulation and coordination be achieved, which will ensure the most productive and economical use of available funds.[1]

The State Advisory Councils recommend that -

> Because vocational education and training can address national concerns and contribute to their solutions, there should exist at the Federal level, an education entity to provide national leadership for vocational education. The Federal entity should assist states through a sole state education agency in addressing national concerns and priorities which are affected by vocational education and training. The local educational delivery system should be assisted with Federal funds, which flow through that sole state's education agency.[2]

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1. Vocational education is organized educational programs which are directly related to the occupational preparation of individuals for paid and unpaid employment. Training is the acquisition of skills for a specific job requiring varied, but usually short-term, training periods.

2. A "Sole State Education Agency" is a board or agency whose primary responsibility is education, who under reauthorization would be identified as the sole state agency responsible for the administration, or for the supervision of administration, of programs under the act.

V. Funding of Vocational Education

In reviewing the total expenditures at all levels for vocational education, advisory councils have determined that the Federal contribution is important though limited. Current state and local funding of vocational education far exceeds Federal funding; yet the Federal government exerts the greatest control over vocational education.

Among advisory councils, it is commonly accepted that the financial responsibility for vocational education is a shared responsibility among Federal, state, and local governments. It must be recognized, however, that the primary responsibility for funding of vocational education lies within the domain of state and local governments. Federal funding for vocational education should be maintained for the education and training of skilled workers to ensure continued economic development. Through a specified educational entity, the Federal government must determine the national priorities for vocational education and training and flow funds to the states based on these priorities. It is the states' right and their responsibility to determine how these Federal funds will be used for vocational education and training within the state to address the national priorities (e.g., economic revitalization). Planning for expenditure of Federal funds and development of programs at the state level must include local data and address local problems in keeping with national and state priorities.

Providing for close and direct communication with the local communities, citizen input to assure realistic planning and responsible program administration requires special categorical funds for National and State Advisory Councils for Vocational Education. These funds should flow through the Federal education entity to the councils.

To maintain viable vocational education and training programs with the capacity to meet future economic needs and increase the productive capacity of the work force, requires program improvements. These improvements may include, but are not limited to: research and development, preservice and inservice education for vocational education personnel, economic efficiency of the family, curriculum, innovation, exemplary and research coordination. Federal funding for program improvement efforts must address present and future goals of America in terms of economic and human resource development.

Federal dollars should be used as incentives to state and local agencies for expansion and improvement of vocational education programs and services. Services to student organizations, which are an integral part of vocational education, should be included since they contribute directly and positively to human resource development.

The State Advisory Councils recommend that -

In accordance with required state planning mechanisms, Federal funding for vocational education should flow through the state's sole education agency to the local levels. These Federal dollars should be provided to fund those activities which are universally beneficial and/or directly related to national priorities.

Federal funding should be provided in support of the involvement and participation of business, industry, labor, agriculture, and general public on Advisory Councils at the Federal and state levels, assuring their continued operation and fiscal autonomy. These special categorical funds should be distributed by the Federal education entity to those councils on the basis of a grant application to fulfill their responsibilities for citizen oversight of and input into vocational education and training programs.

Federal legislation should provide for the continuation of program improvement. Program improvement funds should flow to the state sole education agency for the purpose of determining priorities for efforts to improve programs. This determination to be a part of a state planning mechanism.

Separate Federal funds should be provided to expand the capacity of the population's work force by improving and increasing the development of the collective states' vocational education and training programs. These Federal dollars should also be used as incentives to ensure access for all populations to vocational education and training programs.

VI. Citizen Oversight and Participation in Vocational Education

The success of American education has rested primarily on a close association and communication with its citizenry. However, the effectiveness of this relationship has been compromised through fragmentation and Federal over-regulation. It is imperative that citizen involvement and communication be restored.

Evaluating the results of vocational programs is just as important as the initial planning of sound programs. Here, too, the involvement of

representatives from business, industry, labor, agriculture and the public is essential. Citizen participation in evaluation ensures that the "users" view of the product will be obtained. The views of citizen advisors provide a valuable third dimension, which the educational community needs for an objective assessment of vocational programs. This "oversight" role must be included in the Federal law.

Advisory councils must function autonomously to objectively carry out their advisory and oversight roles. Their independence is vital to their effectiveness and survival.

In summary, citizen input is sine qua non to their effective planning and objective evaluation of vocational programs. Such input can not be left to chance; it must be ensured by mandating the use of state and Federal advisory councils and providing them with the independence and funding needed to operate.

The planning of quality vocational education requires effective involvement of leaders from business, industry, labor, agriculture, and the public. These groups should constitute the majority of members on advisory councils for vocational education. Since advisory councils will be primarily representative of the noneducational community, councils must have the authority for obtaining pertinent information from the educational community and the channels to formally submit advice on vocational planning and policy formation.

The State Advisory Councils recommend that -

The citizens' right to advise on and oversee the delivery of vocational education and training services should be continued in Federal legislation. At the state and Federal levels, this legislation should provide for an Advisory Council system which is operationally and fiscally autonomous.

Legislation should guarantee to each council the right to advise and participate in planning at its level, to review evaluations and accountability data and to make recommendations to improve the delivery of vocational education and training. Such recommendations must be reviewed and responded to in a timely and responsible manner by the State Board of Vocational Education.

In order that Advisory Councils may maximize their contribution to vocational education and training, vocational legislation should guarantee that the operational process of councils will be left to each respective council.

The membership of Advisory Councils for Vocational Education should be at least seventy-five percent representatives of business, industry, labor, agriculture, and the citizenry. The current appointment authority for members should be continued. Appointments should be to staggered three year terms with a consistent appointment date for all Councils.

VII. Vocational Student Organizations

Vocational student organizations are an integral part of vocational education. Leadership development within vocational education instruction is accomplished in a laboratory setting through organized activities. Leadership development is vital to the optimum development of our human resources; further, it contributes to overall productivity on the work site. Leadership development is critical to a sound economic future for America.

The State Advisory Councils recommend that -

Vocational student organizations should be provided for in reauthorization of vocational education.